

PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE: MISARCHAIA, SCHOLARSHIP,
AND THE PRE-MODERN TEXT

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When the forces of nature furnish us with exercises in humility, they very often do so in such a way that some offspring of those exercises remain with us far longer than does our humility. In 1966 such an assault by nature was unleashed upon Italy—more specifically, upon Florence—in the form of a flood. As a result of this single act of nature the Florentine fine arts community found itself obliged to take notice of the dire conditions of many of the city's treasures—among them, the frescoes of Guido di Piero di Gino, better known as Fra Angelico. Though it was the flooding that had sounded an alarm, it soon became apparent that the existent sorry state of affairs owed more to the accumulation of some 400 years of dampness, pollution, neglect, and makeshift reparation than to the flood of 1966. In the end, however, this story proves to be one of achievement with a happy ending, one that resulted in the union of chemists and restoration scholars such as professors Dino Dini, Enzo Ferroni and Umberto Baldini, among others, and in the rejuvenated state of the Fra Angelico frescoes as well as significant advancements in the science of art restoration.

What are the discursive or textual pollutants equivalent to those haptic contaminants which accumulated over the centuries upon the Fra Angelico frescoes, and what procedures are available to the postmodern scholar interested in accessing the representations beneath the layers? These are the questions that the following pages explore. The scrutiny of any cultural informative, be it a representation such as a Fra Angelico fresco, a manuscript such as the *Cantar de mio Cid* or a historical event such as the battle of the Navas de Tolosa, or the unification of Castile and Leon, finds its essence here in a practice common to cultural poetics: that of examining such informatives in textual terms.

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If an entire culture is regarded as a text, then everything is at least potentially in play both at the level of representation and at the level of event. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a clear, unambiguous boundary between what is representation and what is event. At the very least, the drawing or maintaining of that boundary is itself an event. (Gallagher 15)

These words from the introduction to *Practicing New Historicism* by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt call attention to what has become one of the central unifying insights within cultural poetics: "history as text."¹ "This is," to quote Hayden White, "a metaphor, but it is no more metaphorical than Marx's statement that 'all previous history is the history of class struggle' or the statement by Fox-Genovese that 'History, at least good history, is inescapably structural'" (*The New Historicism*, 297). The distillation of representation and event into the single classification, "text," represents quite an effortless evolution as a result of their discursive common ground: both constitute informative acts, and so, potentially, insert themselves within the textual/contextual dynamics of culture. In that light, two questions are implicitly postulated by any given text or textual fragment: first, what textuality has informed this text, and, second, what textuality is informed by this text?

The Fra Angelico example from the visual arts illuminates issues that prove applicable to any aesthetic product upon which the perpetual flow of informing textuality, and perhaps some of the same neglect and makeshift treatment, may have allowed ages of contaminants to accumulate. Such contaminants, unlike those found in the Fra Angelico frescoes, are often discovered, not by means of visual or tactile examination, but rather conceptually. The extraneous matter which accumulated upon the painted surfaces of the Fra Angelico frescoes and which stood between his representations and the eyes of the beholder interferes not only with the visual/perceptual experience of any given observer, but also with any of the viewer's elucidations that might have come about as a result. Similarly, the informing textuality accumulated upon the psyche of the observer between his historic

moment and that of the producers of any given representation or event meddles in very much that same manner. Ironically, such textuality is not only natural and unavoidable, but also useful or even essential in some venues. However, for the scholar interested in pursuing cultural insight or, as Stephen Greenblatt puts it, "with a desire to speak with the dead" (1), such textuality must also find itself categorized as part of the accumulation of impurities between a potentially informing subject and its potentially informed object.²

One of those impurities frequently reveals itself in the form of the *misarchaia* or *odium antiquitatis* that so often accompanies the scrutiny of documents begotten under the thought strictures of generations chronologically disparate from that of the reader. This phenomenon evidences what might be described as a transfiguration of Horace's *Ars Poetica* utterance from "*laudator temporis acti*" to *culpator temporis acti*, and constitutes a manner of bigotry that can easily go unchallenged. The long-since-departed, after all, are not likely to mount a protest at any time soon and, what kind of "flood" can be contemplated which might escalate any sense of urgency or crisis and so draw attention to the situation?

From our post-modern perspective, modernity seems to have been especially uncooperative or unsympathetic concerning this age-related accumulation of impurities and to have remained infinitely more invested in the project of self-validation and definition attested to by the scholarship of Hans Blumenberg (*The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*), Stephen Toulmin (*Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*), and Brian Stock (*Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past*), among others. This holds especially true with regards to the Modern's erudition concerning the medieval period. Modernity traditionally has dealt with the Middle Ages far more severely than it deals with antiquity. We find these so-called "Dark Ages," in the hands of the Moderns, described by Blumenberg as having been "lowered to the rank of a provisional phase of human self-realization, one that was bound to be left behind, and [was] finally disqualified as a mere interruption between antiquity and modern times" (77). It is as though the moderns found whatever rootstocks they sought in classical prototypes, while little more than the antithesis to its own project of

self-definition was determined to dwell between the fifth and fifteenth centuries. As Stephen Nichols puts it, "Modernism sought to make the Middle Ages in its own image," and, "In anxiously asserting its own legitimacy in its early phases, modernity defined itself away from the Middle Ages" (*New Medievalism* 8). Regarding the pre-modern text, Paul Strohm points out that "the peculiarity of medieval space involves the extent to which it is already symbolically organized by the meaning-making activities of the many generations that have traversed it" (4).

The concept and rhetoric of "progress" constitutes a dominant force for the incursion of *misarchaia* as a contaminant. The appellation is both linear and judgmental. Through it, a convergence of value adjudications affixes an event or representation to a time line which experiences a continuous discarding of values past—even those belonging to the immediate past—in favor of those deemed applicable to the present and, to a very considerable degree, the future as well. Therefore, whenever a given modification in the status quo is acknowledged and characterized as "progress," we find ourselves obliged to infer that the existent values it displaces, usurps, or supplants must be recognized as betokening fault, error, defect, lack, incompleteness, etc. Consequently, the linear condition consists of an infinite series of temporal points of demarcation. It is not only that past standards are discarded, but that they will sink ever deeper into the discard heap as greater temporal divergence serves, by degrees, to compound this judgment, thereby connoting ever greater fault in them. (If *this* standard is right, then *that* standard was wrong and *yonder* standards of some bygone age are sunken still more deeply into error.) The now/then, present/past binary oppositions display a structure which unequivocally situates correctness or rightness in the now or present, and thereby facilitates all the powers and privileges that such cultural capital subsidizes.

The contemporary audience of any given event or representation finds itself informed, at least potentially, by a degree of shared textuality consisting of both antecedent and concurrent events and representations. The prevailing avenues of discourse that contribute to the construction of "progress" at any given historical moment,

therefore, not only diverge from those which fashioned the concept during eras prior, but also find themselves beset by newly bifurcated judgments. The notion of "progress," while perhaps not a contaminant in and of itself, consolidates temporal linearity with judgmental deliberation, thus providing the crucible that fuses these contaminants into the contemporary psyche. Some evidence of this pattern is ample and perceptible in the studies of some of our most respected scholars.

In Daniel Eisenberg's article, "No hubo una Edad 'Media' española," the author disinherits medieval Castilian literature in the following manner:

Al pasar los años, me ha molestado cada vez más la temática de algunas de las obras que tenía que enseñar. Las *Coplas* de Jorge Manrique enseñan que se gana el cielo con sangre de moros. En el *Cantar*, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar estafa a judíos, mata a moros y cobra parias como si fueran justas y normales.

As the years pass by, the themes of some of the works that I had to teach have come to trouble me more and more. The *Coplas* of Jorge Manrique teach that heaven is gained by the shedding of Moorish blood. In the *Cantar*, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar cheats Jews, kills Moors and collects tribute as if these acts were just and normal.³

For Eisenberg, religious intolerance on the part of Jorge Manrique and the anonymous *juglar* of the *Cantar de mio Cid* constitutes sufficient moral grounds for their dismissal from his favor, his scholarship and his curriculum. Evident in such a judgment, however, is the manifestation of a corresponding *misarchaia*. The values represented in Eisenberg's words may exhibit as infrangible a barrier to the past as did the unknown and unknowable mores of future societies to the medieval poets. The textuality that informs this opposition has not been germinated in the fields of cognizance from which the *juglar* and Jorge Manrique were enlightened; rather, the operative influences are the forceful events and representations found in our own time (such as the advent of fascism, the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust, the

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Nürnberg trials, the atomic bomb, the Cold War and the sociopolitical climate of the 1960s—cultural informatives beyond their ken).

Eisenberg's essay goes on to assume a broad revisionist posture toward the letters of medieval Iberia, one seemingly intended to displace those of Castile. This eloquent reasoning may prove sufficient to convince some contemporaries who, by definition of the word, are those whose temporal experiences fall parallel; however, it also reveals, cultivates, and advances a *misarchaic* perspective. Valid as the plea for a more inclusive attitude toward Iberian textuality may be, the posture assumed reveals that said inclusion might serve to exclude, attenuate, or marginalize those same representations that are condemned. The argument made in this case for just consideration of those Iberian works beyond Castile manifests a perception of unjust conduct or behavior on the part of the protagonists and creators of the Castilian works, works which appear to be linked metonymically to the whole of Castilian culture of the era. The closer we remain to *that* past, it would seem, the less we have progressed. This approach, while profitable in some respects, incurs the risk of as great an intolerance, with regard to the values of the period, as that which Eisenberg finds in the aforementioned texts.

In his introduction to *The New Historicism*, H. Aram Veeseer articulates five "key assumptions" that tend to unite the varied practitioners of a culturally informed approach to scholarship as heterogeneous and eclectic as is the New Historicism. Several seem especially applicable in this case. Veeseer asserts:

1. that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
2. that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practices it exposes;
3. that literary and non-literary 'texts' circulate inseparably;
4. that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature;

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5. . . . that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. (xi)

Items 1, 2, and 4 seem especially pertinent in this instance. In "No hubo una Edad 'Media' española" we see how post-modern moral and ethical convictions concerning religious and racial tolerance can render someone intolerant toward certain pre-modern people, the material practices of whom offend said convictions as if they represented "unchanging truths." This stance represents an example of a very common practice, that of arbitrating historical phenomena, in this case pre-modern, with modern, or even post-modern, values. The tactic, in this instance, may also have been superfluous; the same case, for inclusiveness at least, might have been made every bit as effectively without *misarchaia*. The vast accumulation of representational informatives that interact between the texts in question and our own historical moment have been allowed to contaminate the receptive atmosphere. The phenomenon is to be anticipated; contagions necessarily accrue as a consequence of time and contact.

Eisenberg takes exception to, and makes an example of, the *temática* of two specific works, the first of which is Jorge Manrique's eulogy entitled *Coplas por la muerte de don Rodrigo Manrique*. His words imply certain didactic effects precipitated by the poem, specifically, that paradise is to be achieved through the killing of Moors. In an era when scholarly consideration of authorial intentions so often seems "rearguard," the eulogy is one poetic mode which continues to imply intentionality. Surely Eisenberg's intention is not to imply that the death of Rodrigo Manrique presented the son with an opportunity for didactic discourse fixed upon such an end, but rather, came about as a consequence of the discursive and conceptual avenue taken by the poet's reflections. This seems especially clear when we consider that the verses to which Eisenberg alludes represent a minor theme in a relatively long and complex poem that concerns itself with a son's reflections on his father's life and its meaning, contemplated at the time of the father's death. The son copes with his father's demise lyrically by commemorating the life led by the father in positivistic

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terms. The son makes reference to the great respect the father had earned from his peers and vassals and dwells on the enviable circumstances of Rodrigo Manrique's final moments, at which time he retains all his faculties and is comforted by the presence of his wife and children. The son also esteems his father for possessing a strong religious faith. This faith, according to the poem, finds itself imbedded in certain material acts that include representing Christianity by taking up arms against Muslims within a religiously contentious physical and temporal space. These acts are characterized as comparable to other religious practices worthy of Christian devotion. The elder Manrique had been a knight of the order of *Santiago* (Saint James) and, following the death of Juan de Pacheco in 1474, rose to the order's highest position, *Maestre* (Master or Grand Master).

The verses that most directly represent the attitude that seems to concern Eisenberg (stanzas 34-37) are spoken by a venerable personification of Death who approaches don Rodrigo on his deathbed and entreats that he accept his fate and look favorably back upon the events of a virtuous life:

«Buen caballero,
dexad el mundo engañoso
y su halago,
vuestro corazón de azero
muestre su esfuerço famoso
en este trago;
y pues de vida y salud
hezistes tan poca cuenta
por la fama,
esforçad vuestra virtud
para sufrir esta afruenta
que os llama.

»No se os haga tan amarga
la batalla temerosa
que esperáis,

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pues otra vida más larga
de fama tan gloriosa
acá dexáis.
Aunque esta vida de honor
tampoco no es eternal
ni verdadera,
mas con todo es muy mejor
que la otra temporal,
perescederá.

»El vivir que es perdurable
no se gana con estados
mundanales,
ni con vida deleitable
en que moran los pecados
infernales.
Mas los buenos religiosos
gánanlo con oraciones
y con lloros;
los caballeros famosos,
con trabajos y aflicciones
contra moros.

»Y pues vos, claro varón,
tanta sangre derramastes
de paganos,
esperad el galardón
que en este mundo ganastes
por las manos;
y con esta confiança,
y con la fe tan eterna
que tenéis,
partid con buena esperança,
que esta otra vida tercera
ganaréis». (Rico 177-78)

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“Good Sir Knight,
leave this duplicitous world
and its blandishments;
let your heart of steel
show its famed force
in this encounter;
and since you life and health
so little took into account
in your search for renown,
prepare your virtuous self
to accept this affront
that you must suffer.

“Do not make out to be so bitter
the fearful battle
that you await,
since another longer life
of glorious fame
you leave behind.
Although this life of honor
also is not eternal
nor true,
even then it is much better
that the other temporal,
perishable one.

“The life that lasts forever
is not won with worldly
estates,
nor with a sweet life
where infernal sin
will dwell;
Rather the chaste religious
gain it with prayers
and tears;
the famous knights

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with travail and afflictions
'gainst the Moors.

"And since you, noble knight,
so much pagan blood
have spilled,
await the prize
that in this world you won
by your own hands;
and with this confidence
and with the eternal faith
that you possess,
depart this world with high hopes
that this other, third life
will you gain."

With these verses, Jorge Manrique's Christian perspective positions the holy warrior in the center, parallel with that of the "buenos religiosos." He situates the marginalized Muslim between the Christian and eternal life in the form of a defining obstacle or test of loyalty. Simultaneously, he validates the center through reference to its opposition. This oppositional act accrues cultural credit, in part, because of the mortal consequences inherent in the material practice of armed conflict, which provides potential means by which the Christian soldier may be delivered. This delivery also constitutes an act that will continue to inform Christian discourse. In the case of Rodrigo Manrique, especially regarding "la vida de fama"—"esta otra vida tercera"—Jorge Manrique's eulogy plays as important a role as did his father's deeds in sustaining the informing effect that those deeds inspired.

Whether the position presented in "No hubo una Edad 'Media' española" proves an accurate characterization or not may be indeterminable, but a good deal more cogency or, at least, cultural insight might be derived from an argument informed to a greater degree by the outlying textuality of Jorge Manrique's generation rather than one informed by our own modern, or post-modern, set of values.

Scholarship concerning the second work remarked upon in Eisenberg's article—*Cantar de mio Cid/Poema de mio Cid*—may illustrate this point still more clearly. Although the values that plague Eisenberg are similar, temporal separation includes an additional two and a half centuries of culturally interpolated textuality. In the episode alluded to (stanzas 1-11), Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the Cid, finds himself, and all those who depend upon him, in dire straights after he has been banished from Castile and his assets have been impounded by his king. To finance the move to another land that he is thereby forced to undertake, he resorts to this stratagem: His faithful follower, Martín Antolínez, borrows 600 marks from two Jewish bankers, Raquel and Vidas, and leaves with them two locked coffers as collateral. Supposedly these contain gold but in actuality they are filled with sand. The bankers do not discover this because of a stipulation that neither coffer is to be opened for the remainder of the year (63-88).

Eisenberg's assertion that "Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar estafa a judíos, mata a moros y cobra parias como si fueran justas y normales" ("cheats Jews, kills Moors, and collects tribute as if these acts were just and normal") takes a great deal for granted. The series of events does not explain itself in so conspicuous a manner as this description presumes and would lead the reader to believe. If the *temática* mentioned proves unsettling, one is left to conclude, implicitly, that the payment of tribute is neither a just practice nor a common one and that the motives for cheating Jews and killing Moors might both arise from the same equally depraved value system concerning religious intolerance. No attempt emerges to interrogate either the value system at work that leads to the material behavior cited nor that of the voice engaged in making those judgments. How common was the practice of paying tribute? What representations and events informed the notion of justice and normality concerning these kinds of material acts? Was the Cid being deceitful or resourceful, or some combination of the two? Did he deceive Raquel and Vidas because they were Jews or because they were bankers or did the gravity of his monetary state dictate the subterfuge? Are the bankers Jews so that the Cid might cheat them or are they Jews because they are bankers during an era when Christian cultural directives forbade usury? Did Rodrigo Díaz intend to repay the

debt even though there was really no collateral to be lost? What is entailed in the Cid's chicanery? Some testing of these and other questions would seem to be in order. Scholarship to date does not seem to have put these questions to rest so definitively as Eisenberg's words suggest.

The lack of any episode in the *Cantar* concerning repayment of the Cid's debt to Raquel and Vidas has not convinced scholars that, for the audience of the *juglar*, the debt was never paid. It may rather represent an oversight or an alternate reading on the part of the *juglar* who performed this specific version (something not at all uncommon in the oral tradition⁴) or of the scribe—Per Abbat—who copied it down. Intertextuality between the *Cantar de mio Cid*, and other work—such as the *Primera Crónica General* of 1289, Pedro Alfonso's *Disciplina clericalis* from the early 12th century, the *Siete Partidas*, the *Crónica Particular* dated about 1370, and a number of other *juglar* voices, such as the *Romancero*—has granted greater textual range and might be described as the preferred proving ground for a variety of viewpoints espoused by an even greater variety of scholars. The perception of an antisemitic spirit in the Raquel and Vidas episode was forcefully articulated by 19th- and 20th-century scholars such as Andrés Bello and Giulio Bertoni. The former judged the episode quite severely as having been “inventada sin duda para ridiculizar a los judíos, clase entonces mui rica, poderosa i odiada” (210) (“doubtlessly invented to ridicule the Jews, a class then very rich, powerful and hated”). The topic has since been scrutinized by many others.⁵ Seymour Resnick judges the events very much along the same line as Bello:

Though Raquel and Vidas are not specifically called Jews in the poem, all the critics consulted refer to them as such, taking it for granted that in the earliest Spanish literary work the avaricious moneylender was already typed as a Jew. Raquel and Vidas have the unpleasant characteristics associated in the medieval Christian mind with Jewish usurers. When we first meet them, they are counting their money (v. 101); after hearing the Cid's proposition, they decide that there must be some financial gain for them (v. 123); they show distrust (with

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reason) when Martín Antolínez first asks for the six hundred marcos (v. 139); anticipating a profit, they fawn upon the Cid, kissing his hand several times (v. 153-79); they are filled with joy as they load the heavy chests on the mules (v. 170); when Antolínez asks for a reward, Raquel and Vidas give him thirty marcos. Did the poet choose the figure thirty because of its unpleasant association with the betrayal of Christ, attributed to the Jews? (54-58)

Ramón Menéndez Pidal, on the other hand, subscribes to the opinion that the lack of a repayment episode comes as a result of an oversight—perhaps on the part of the scribe—and calls special attention to a verse from the *Primera Crónica General* that speaks to the Cid's insistence that Álvaro Fáñez, prime mover for the original deception concerning the loan, be the one who should deliver payment of the debt: "et dezitles que me perdonen, ca el engaño de las arcas con cuyta lo fiz" (120). He also cites passages from the *Crónica Particular* and, from the *Romancero*, the "Mensajes que el Cid encomienda a Álvaro Fáñez, y presentes que envia al rey":

... y a los honrados judíos
Raquel y Vidas, llevá
doscientos marcos de oro,
tantos de plata, y non más,
que me endonaron prestados,
cuando me partí a lidiar,
sobre dos cofres de arena,
debajo de mi verdad;
rogarles hies de mi parte
que me quieran perdonar,
que con acuita lo fiece
de mi gran necesidad,
que aunque cuidan que es arena
lo que en los cofres está,
quedó soterrado en ella
el oro de mi verdad.

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Págales la logrería,
que soy tenuto a les dar
del tiempo que su dinero
he tenido a mi mandar. (487)

... and to the honorable Jews
Raquel and Vidas, take
two hundred marks of gold,
the same number of silver, and no more,
[to repay moneys] that they lent me
when I sallied forth to war,
leaving them two coffers of sand
and my promise as security.
Implore their forgiveness in my name
for I did this impelled by my great need.
[Tell them] that though they may think
it is sand that fills the chests;
buried in them they will find
the golden truth that is mine.
Give them then the interest
that I am obliged to pay
for the time that their moneys
in my possession I have held.

Julio Cejador disagrees with Menéndez Pidal, saying that: "Ante todo, [el Cid] no les promete reparación, sino que se desentiende feamente de ellos" (36; "Above all, [the Cid] does not promise them reparation; rather he says in an ugly way that he wants nothing more to do with them"). Menéndez y Pelayo characterizes the Cid's ploy as "poco loable" (not very admirable), something that he feels contributes to the "efecto realista" of the *Cantar* (129). Ángel Valbuena Prat also calls attention to the realism that the Raquel and Vidas venture bestows upon the work by linking it to a corresponding and therefor informing sense of hostility at large during the medieval period that was directed toward the Jews (40). José Amador de los Ríos reads the Cid's character in such positivistic terms that he finds repayment to be a

forgone conclusion, be it stated in the *Cantar* or not; he declares: “. . . conocida la magnificencia y largueza de Mio Cid para con los suyos y extraños, y consignado por el autor que volvieron á Castilla ricos cuantos le visitaron en Valencia, no es racional suponer que dejara sin pago y sin premio á los judíos de Burgos” (185) (“as well known as is the magnificence and generosity of Mio Cid [both] toward his own and others whom he might meet, and being stated by the author that all those who visited him in Valencia returned rich to Castile, it is not logical to suppose that he would not pay and reward the Jews of Burgos”). James Fitzmaurice-Kelly is not quite so affirmative as Amador de los Ríos but believes the *juglar* to have “look[ed] upon the incident as a normal business transaction” and in no way inconsistent with “the Cid’s fine sense of honour” (19). Frederick Schlegel (195), Dámaso Alonso (97) and Eleazar Huerta (112-18) all pay central attention to the episode for advancing some comic affect upon the work. Leo Spitzer does not condone the deception but also seems to perceive the danger of falling into *misarchaic* judgements regarding the incident:

No hagamos confusiones: la moralidad medieval no es la nuestra. Para un aristócrata del siglo XI contaba la obligación moral de pagar mil misas prometidas al abad de San Pedro; no tanto la de pagar 600 marcos a judíos. Un engaño perpetrado contra judíos, gentes sin tierras, era pecado venial, perdonable en vista de la necesidad de “ganarse el pan”, tantas veces subrayada en nuestro poema. (105-17)

Let us not confuse the matter: the medieval morality is not the same as ours. For an aristocrat of the eleventh century, there existed a moral obligation to pay for the thousand masses promised to the Abbot of San Pedro; not so much that of repaying 600 marks to the Jews. A deceit practiced on Jews, landless people, was a venial sin, pardonable in view of the necessity of “procuring one’s daily bread,” [as was] underlined so many times in our poem.

C. Colin Smith seems to sense the same inclination that modern and postmodern readings attract. He writes: "However difficult it may be for us to accept it with our modern ideas of morality and our modern guilts about antisemitism, the Cid's ability to cheat the Jews was (in the mind of the author and his twelfth-century audience) just another facet of his heroic character. . . ."⁶ Josep Sola-Solé finds the episode to be relatively neutral, still allowing for the possibility of some degree of religious prejudice while rejecting the existence of any racial prejudice (9). In spite of learned opinions to the contrary, Cidian legend and tradition, as presented in the *Primera Crónica General*, Pedro Alfonso's *Disciplina clericalis*, the *Siete Partidas*, the *Crónica Particular*, and the *Romancero*, clearly demonstrate that the debt was of consequence to the Cid. The episodes concerning the quittance of the obligation, as related, for example, in the words of the *romance* cited earlier, complicate value judgments far more than do they crystallize them. The apology of the *romance* does concede, implicitly, that the two creditors' good faith has been victimized. (In the event of Rodrigo Díaz's death before repayment of the debt—a very real possibility given his vocation and situation—the consequences of the original misrepresentation would have been deeply felt by his creditors. They assumed the monetary risks.) Still it appears that, beyond the deception concerning collateral, both factions—most certainly Raquel and Vidas—conducted their negotiations in good faith and that the deception concerning the security appears to have found greater motivation in necessity than in sectarian malice. And if the debt was honored, the victims, presumably, suffered no monetary injury. In the mind of the Cid, at least, he has paid his debt, thereby honoring his creditors and reducing the coffers to a symbolic representation of that obligation, as characterized by the phrase, "el oro de mi verdad." He also shows respect for these Jewish bankers in word as well as deed—being careful to refer to them as "honrados." Absent, however, from the Cid's value system, as represented in the *Cantar*, is the concept of any payment of reparations.

Such contentions are likely to take hold more readily with a reader who is predisposed to favor the protagonist. This favor may be the presumed reader response to the *Cantar de mio Cid*, yet, by opening the

door to informing textuality as evidence for any position, that door remains open for all alternative positions that the textuality might support. Dissenting representations participate in the same informing dynamic as affirmative or detached textuality. A look at the always evenhanded Edmund de Chasca's 1967 contribution to the debate from *El arte juglaresco en el «Cantar de mio Cid»* proves revealing:

En cuanto al debate entre Menéndez Pidal y Leo Spitzer, me parece que son vulnerables en varios puntos los razonamientos del segundo: Se le olvida el verso más significativo sobre el asunto, el 1.436, verso que expresa inconfundiblemente la sinceridad del Cid al prometer el pago; se contradice al alabarlo, de una parte, como dechado de todas las virtudes caballerescas y, de otra, al negarle la mayor de esas virtudes, a saber, la veracidad del caballero. En cuanto a la tesis de Resnic, no se puede negar que ciertas obras de la Edad Media miran al judío como elemento perturbador de la religión. Pero no creemos que el *Cid* sea una de ellas. (129)

As regards the debate between Menéndez Pidal and Leo Spitzer, the reasoning of the second-mentioned seems to me vulnerable on various points: He forgets the most significant verse that refers to the matter. That is line 1436, which expresses unequivocally the sincerity of the Cid when he promises to repay the debt. [Were he then to break his promise,] he would be contradicting himself; he would be denying his position as an embodiment of all knightly virtues on the one hand and, on the other, of the single most important of all these: that a knight must keep his word. As far as the thesis of Resnic is concerned, one can not deny that certain medieval works perceive the Jew as a subversive religious element. But we do not believe that the *Cid* is one of them.

To which works does de Chasca refer here and, if the existence of texts or textual fragments that embrace a unfavorable attitude toward the Jews, such as those described by Resnic and alluded to by de

Chasca, cannot be denied, then what prevents anyone suspecting an antisemitic position inherent in the *Cantar* or the *Coplas* from pressing them into service, as others have done with the *Primera Crónica General*, the *Crónica Particular*, and the “Mensajes que el Cid encomienda a Álvar Fáñez, y presentes que envía al rey,” etc., as evidence of an informing textual atmosphere that is unsympathetic and intolerant toward the Jewish community in Spain? If Eisenberg, or anyone else, perceives and wishes to register an antisemitic attitude abroad in the Raquel and Vidas episode, he might better navigate the cultural textuality by pressing into service those texts alluded to by de Chasca while endeavoring to give modern and postmodern values a wide berth. There is nothing to suggest that Semitic malefic intertextuality constitutes a less dynamic informing representation for the anonymous *juglar* who composed the *Cantar* than pro-Semitic or neutral intertextuality such as those texts called upon by Menéndez Pidal. With textuality in mind, a considerable effort has to be made explaining how certain representations and events informed a given text while others did not.

In postponing interpretation in order first to allow synchronic and antecedent cultural traces to speak as extensively as possible, we find that the resulting interpretations and judgmental associations are likely to be far more complex than at first blush they appeared, and we also see how one of the dangers inherent in the criticism of medieval texts has to do with utilizing for the purpose of study values and convictions which have been culturally informed primarily through late modern and early post-modern textuality. Hayden White discusses the access to events and representations from the past and the means by which they are consequently communicated to the present and the future in the introduction (“The Poetics of History”) to his book, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, and again in his essay “Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” where he states,

Histories . . . are not only about events but also about the possible sets of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure. These sets of relationships are not, however, immanent in the events themselves; they exist only

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in the mind of the historian reflecting on them. Here they are present as the modes of relationships conceptualized in the myth, fable, and folklore, scientific knowledge, religion, and literary art, of the historian's own culture. (*Tropics* 94)

The words "Histories," "historian," and "historian's" can comfortably be exchanged for "Poems," "poet," and "poet's," respectively, inasmuch as White's message to historians has to do with their inescapable dependence upon poetics for their craft. Later in the same essay he comments,

In point of fact, history—the real world as it evolves in time—is made sense of in the same way that the poet or novelist tries to make sense of it, i.e., by endowing what originally appears to be problematical and mysterious with the aspect of a recognizable, because it is a familiar, form. It does not matter whether the world is conceived to be real or imagined; the manner of making sense of it is the same. (98)

Should White be correct in his appraisal, as I believe him to be, then the narrative mode—romance, comedy, tragedy, satire, epic, etc.—and the figurative language used to make the episodes familiar—metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, simile, etc.—diachronically transform the textuality that informs that familiarity. If we return to the reference to the historian's or poet's "own culture," and recognize that the culture of any given historical moment evolves as the product of the events and representations—the textuality—that inform it, then we must also recognize that, as the representations and events of one historic moment inform the textuality of another, the reader's cultural vantage point remains pivotally altered. One of the consequential requirements for scholars interested in cultural insights concerning outlying textualities, may be characterized as an archaeology of knowledge, a re-informative discipline that might mitigate the degree to which the layers of intervening textuality informs their erudition. A dilemma for the post-modern scholar concerning *misarchaia* and other contaminants stems from the quicksand quality of the textual terrain that lies between us

and the composer of the textual fragment in question. As scholars, we must remain cognizant of its mutable nature while simultaneously seeking in its incertitude an underlayment strong enough to support the quest. We realize that it must provide us with the essential tools of the erudition we require but know also that it is this same "time between" has given us our own *weltanschauung*, the morals, ethics and principles that will guide us, but also misguide us, in our exploration.

When the intervening textuality found between our historic moment and that of a given representation or event distorts our reception beyond an acceptable degree, as did four centuries of dampness, pollution, neglect, and makeshift reparations to Fra Angelico's frescoes, fresh alternatives are required. In the case of those frescoes at the Convent of San Marco, now called the Museum of San Marco, the carefully repeated applications of small squares of wood pulp doused with chemicals such as ammonium carbonate followed by a rinsing with distilled water proved capable of removing the grime that lay between the frescoes and their prospective viewers. With regard to literary texts, useful methods might include the repeated application of diachronic backtracking to discover discourse that unites the rhetoric of "progress" to a given state of affairs, value, or value system imparted through whatever may be the text in question. Such methods might prove capable of displacing the *misarchaia*, or some degree thereof, from the intervening conceptual space. As Veese noted, "every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practices it exposes" (xi). The notion of "progress," which has played such an important part in advancing the accumulation of *misarchaia*, may now play as significant a role in displacing it through a reinformative discipline. Cultural inquiries into textuality—a textuality that perpetually recasts itself and ceaselessly assimilates and emanates representations and events from limitless informative cells—seek out the latest tools of erudition that our historic moment has to offer while striving simultaneously to obviate the contaminating elements that emerge from the intervening cultural informatives. Fortunately we live during an era that often looks favorably upon erudition dedicated to the exploration of informing textualities, so often writing away from the text in order to capture and

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exhibit cultural traces. Texts and textual fragments themselves can be utilized as representations capable of manifesting informed and informing cultural textuality at work within and without texts and that will represent, fashion, transform, and assimilate the cultural codes of its own era and participate in others through a cultural-informatives-in, material-practices-out, continuum. If Veerer's and White's viewpoints can be accepted, then perhaps the same concept of "progress," which has been described previously as contributing to the accrual and proliferation of *misarchaia*, may also function as an instrument for this archaeology we seek. We can conjecture that the *status quo* described in the *Cantar de mio Cid* and the *Coplas por la muerte de Rodrigo Manrique*, or in any other text or textual fragment, might constitute a cultural modification of a previous era; hence we go searching for its manifestation characterized as "progress" within the cultural informatives of previous generations. Discerning cultural traces in one era stimulates exploration of other eras within comfortable informing distance.

Today, the viewers of the frescoes of Fra Angelico enjoy a closer connection to the images he created because the flood of 1966 called attention to the contamination that had disfigured them. Perhaps a work that appears to seek the disestablishment of a prestigious, centuries-long, national literary tradition for supposed moral shortcomings as they are perceived in today's culture may do for contemporary criticism what the flood of 1966 did for those frescos.

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Notes

¹ Also see Berkhofer.

² The understanding of such terms as “contaminants,” “impurities,” “pollutants,” etc., admittedly takes on more latitude as it expands to incorporate the more comprehensive relationship between text and reader and proceeds to fall much more in line with the usage of these terms as they relate to the arena of translation and interpretation than to that of art restoration.

³ In press for *Propuestas teorico-metodológicas para el estudio de la literatura hispánica medieval*, ed. Lillian van der Walde, México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana- Iztapalapa. Also on line at: http://users.ipfw.edu/jehle/deisenbe/Other_Hispanic_Topics/NOHUBO_UN.htm. Eisenberg himself also called special attention to the words cited above from this article on May 3rd of 2001 at the 36th International Congress on Medieval Studies held at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan, during a panel discussion organized and led by Dawn Bratsch-Prince of Iowa State University, entitled “Transforming the Canon: New Approaches to Teaching Medieval Iberian Literature.” Eisenberg’s title for his part of the panel was “‘Tanta sangre derramastes de paganos’: How to Teach the Literature of the Conquerors.”

⁴ See Rychner (37) and de Chasca (27).

⁵ See Schlegel; Amador de los Ríos, *Historia crítica de la literatura española* (185); Fitzmaurice-Kelly (19); Cejador (36); Alonso; Huerta; Resnick; Valbuena Prat; Montgomery; Smith; Solá-Solé; Salvador Miguel; and Edna Aizenberg.

⁶ See Smith’s introduction to the *Poema de mio Cid*, xiii.

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